

I have a long list of these. Whenever we grant a special break to one tax group, the other taxpayers must pick up the slack. In this case, it acts in two ways: It prefers farmers over the homeowners in your own county. It has another effect which is in the distribution of the money under the equalization program. Those areas which are under-assessed get more money from the State under the equalization program which means that the other taxpayers must pick up the slack. This can only mean that urban areas such as Baltimore City must pay more in the way of taxes.

THE CHAIRMAN: You have one-quarter minute, Delegate Macdonald.

DELEGATE MACDONALD: I am not opposed to the farm assessment program or the farm assessment law but I do believe it should be left up to the General Assembly. I think the proposal made by the Committee here is opposed to the one-man one-vote principle. I think it would be very bad to mandate it in the constitution and I am in favor of the amendment.

THE CHAIRMAN: Does any delegate desire to speak in opposition to the amendment?

Delegate Sherbow.

DELEGATE SHERBOW: Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, I would plead with this Convention, this Committee, to be practical. If ever there was a time to be practical, this is it. You must bear in mind that in the State of Maryland, there is a group of farmers tilling the soil, many of them in a marginal way, without hope of any form of tremendous gain, who want to be left alone to do the work that they are doing. There are others who are waiting just as everybody else is for the day when lightning may strike and they may make more money.

But you must bear this in mind. That this group of farmers, and they are many throughout this State, asked the legislature to pass a law which would save them from having to get rid of their properties and dump them on the market into the laps of these speculators at prices below what they were worth because they could not pay the taxes that were involved because of the fact that they were in areas where taxes and assessments were increasing.

Then after the litigation and they found themselves with a law that was invalid, they had a constitutional amendment prepared, went to the legislature, seven years ago the people spoke on this issue and by

an overwhelming majority they said this is a form of classification that is proper.

What is the next thing that has happened? Only this: At all the hearings before our Committee, I must tell you that for once I felt that the lack of interest in the constitution and the Constitutional Convention was belied because this was one time when the farmers came and with one voice they said we have this in the Constitution, we are entitled to it, do not make it impossible for us to till our farms and to operate them because you want to get at the land speculators.

THE CHAIRMAN: You have one-quarter minute, Delegate Sherbow.

DELEGATE SHERBOW: The way to get to the land speculators is by proper enactment of the General Assembly. By proper administration of the State Tax Commission. It is the way to reach that problem.

But I urge you to be practical and do not let all of these farmers and farming organizations feel that the law that has been approved so overwhelmingly and put in the Constitution has now been taken out. I urge you to vote against this amendment and support the Committee's position.

THE CHAIRMAN: The Chair recognizes Delegate Hanson.

Do you yield to a question of Delegate Adkins?

DELEGATE HANSON: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: Delegate Adkins.

DELEGATE ADKINS: I should like to ask Delegate Hanson if he believes in fact that all farm land exemptions should be eliminated as a matter of law?

THE CHAIRMAN: Delegate Hanson.

DELEGATE HANSON: No.

THE CHAIRMAN: Delegate Adkins.

DELEGATE ADKINS: In view of the income discrepancies that you cited in your statement, how, then, can you justify any continuation of any farm land exemption?

THE CHAIRMAN: Delegate Hanson.

DELEGATE HANSON: It is damned hard!

THE CHAIRMAN: Delegate Adkins.

DELEGATE ADKINS: Is it not fair to say, then, you are advocating a continu-